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LEAVE IT TO POLLY

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# Leave It to Polly

A Comedy in Two Acts

For Female Characters Only

By

GLADYS RUTH BRIDGHAM

*Author of "A Case for Sherlock Holmes," "A Regular Scream," "The Turn in the Road," "The Queen of Hearts," etc.*

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BOSTON  
WALTER H. BAKER & CO.

1914

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# Leave It to Polly

## CHARACTERS

MISS PRISCILLA KITTEN, *principal.*

MISS BEDELIA KITTEN, *her sister.*

MISS OCTAVIA HARDING, *instructor.*

ANNIE, *the maid.*

MARION ESTERBROOK

HILDA MASON

LILLIAN MARTIN

INA SINCLAIR

VIVIAN WINTHROP

MARY ANN MEREDITH ("POLLY")

THE BURGLAR.

} Juniors. Should be played by girls about fourteen or fifteen years old.

## SYNOPSIS

ACT I.—Junior study—Tracy School for Girls. Suburbs of Boston. Afternoon.

ACT II.—The same. Hallowe'en. Evening.

TIME IN PLAYING.—One hour and a half.



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## COSTUMES

In Act I, the girls should wear dark blue skirts and white middy blouses.

In Act II, muslin dresses, and the fancy costumes should be simple enough for a quick change.

MISS HARDING should be young and attractive.

MISS BEDELIA KITTEN should be little and old-fashioned.

THE JUNIORS could be played successfully by girls even younger than fourteen.



# Leave It to Polly

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## ACT I

SCENE.—*Junior Study; Tracy School for Girls.*

(As curtain rises, VIVIAN WINTHROP, LILLIAN MARTIN, MARION ESTERBROOK, INA SINCLAIR and MARY ANN MEREDITH, known as POLLY, sit about a large table studying. MISS OCTAVIA HARDING sits at one end of the table writing. A bell rings. MISS H. exits. POLLY begins to move about, looks at the different girls, but as they are not inclined to give her any attention, balances a book on the end of a ruler. It falls with a crash.)

VIV. For goodness' sake, Polly Ann, do sit still!

INA. Yes, even if you have digested the contents of that pile of books, there are some of us less fortunate.

MAR. I should say as much. I can never make any sense out of geometry if I study a hundred years.

LIL. (warningly). Hush, girls!

*Enter Miss H.*

MISS H. Young ladies, it is four o'clock. [Exit.

POLLY (jumping up and down). Oh, oh, oh! Hardy has saved my life. I should certainly have died if I'd been obliged to sit still another minute.

LIL. Er—Miss Meredith, I fear you forget yourself.

POLLY. Forget myself? I wish I could, long enough to give the faculty of this select seminary one shock.

VIV. I'm thinking, dear one, that it would be you who would have the shock before you got through.

POLLY. Never! Nothing that could happen now would be any surprise to me.

LIL. Oh, Polly, it isn't so dreadful here!

POLLY. Well, perhaps it isn't. You see, you weren't raised on a ranch. Why, girls, sometimes I think I shall go mad to be always cooped up in this stifling place, pretending to study. If I could just get out and run, and run, and run!

MAR. (*slamming a book down*). Hang!

ALL. Marion!

MAR. I don't care! I can't learn that stuff and furthermore I'm not going to try!

POLLY. Good! I'm glad that some one has a little spirit.

LIL. That's no way to talk. You ought to be ashamed, Polly Ann, to stir the girls up the way you do.

POLLY. Stir the girls up? I? Shade of St. Christopher, it would take a cyclone!

VIV. Polly, are we really so very slow?

POLLY. Slow? Goodness, no, dear. You are so rapid that you put the Boston elevated to shame!

LIL. Polly, if Miss Harding heard you, you would have fifty lines more to add to your misery.

POLLY. It's worth it to be able to speak your mind freely.

INA. Fifty lines wouldn't be any misery for Polly. How can you learn the way you do?

POLLY. Just a system I have. I look at the first word in the line and the last and guess at what's in between. Say, let's go out as long as we have that inestimable privilege at this hour of the day.

LIL. Go out? Why, Polly, we aren't half ready for tonight.

INA. If the dominos don't come on the next train, what shall we do?

MAR. Make some ourselves.

POLLY. Goodness, make our costumes?

MAR. Yes. They're really nothing but sheets.

LIL. Don't you believe her! They do look something like sheets, but they make them awfully cute at the costume places. We couldn't make them half as well.

VIV. You needn't worry! I telephoned up to Hayden this noon and he said they would be here sure. Didn't you ever see a domino, Polly?

POLLY. No. We didn't celebrate Hallowe'en on the ranch. To tell the truth, I never heard of it until a week ago.

ALL. What?

MAR. Polly Ann, do you mean to say that you never went to a Hallowe'en party?

POLLY. Never!

LIL. Oh, don't I wish I was you. If you won't have a picnic to-night!

INA. It will be as good as an initiation to see Polly trying the stunts.

VIV. You will do them all, won't you, Polly?

POLLY. Believe me, I will! But come out for five minutes, anyway. I refuse to do a single stunt without a breath of fresh air first.

INA. Well, wait for Hilda.

MAR. Yes, do! That will give me a chance to finish this theorem. I'd rather flunk in any class than Miss Kitten's.

ALL (groaning). Right, oh!

VIV. Where is Hilda?

LIL. Music lesson.

POLLY. She has my sympathy.

INA. You shouldn't speak that way, Polly. Professor Braumautz says Hilda has wonderful talent and can look forward to a brilliant future.

POLLY. It's a good thing. I should want something to look forward to if I was going to de-de-de-de all my happy young life away.

LIL. You don't appreciate music, Polly. I don't suppose you ever heard a great musician.

POLLY. Yes, I did. There was a man from Lone Ranch came down to see dad, and he was a wonder. He could play "Home, Sweet Home" and "Hail Columbia" with his elbows.

INA. Polly!

VIV. Hush! Here comes Hilda. She would never get over it if she heard you say anything about her music.

*Enter HILDA MASON, r., with a package and several letters.*

HILDA. Mail, girls!

ALL. Oh, Hilda! Anything for me?

HILDA (*handing the letters to the girls*). Polly, Lillian, Ina. Catch, Vivian!

(*Throws package to Vivi.*)

MAR. That's a suspicious-looking package, Vivi.

VIV. I know what it is. It's a package of Lowney's for our

party to-night. I dropped a gentle hint to cousin when I was home last week.

ALL. Good for cousin !

POLLY. Girls, my letter is from Martha.

LIL. Oh, is it ?

INA. Is she better ?

MAR. When is she coming back ?

POLLY. Yes, she's better, but the doctor won't let her come back until after the Thanksgiving vacation.

ALL. Isn't that a shame ?

POLLY. Listen, girls, to this. (*Reads.*) "My aunt, Maitilda Sampson, doesn't know that I am ill, and she is on her way to Elmsford to make me a visit. She didn't let us know until after she started, so we can't stop her as we don't know exactly where she is. She will arrive at Elmsford Wednesday on the afternoon train. Will you please meet her ;—and, Polly, will you ask the girls to give her a good time Wednesday night and she can come on here Thursday morning. She may seem a little queer but she is really perfectly lovely. She's never had much chance in life and this is the first time she ever visited a girls' school. For my sake, won't you be nice to her ?" Of course we will ! What does Martha think we are ? Why, we would be nice to a visitor if she wasn't anybody's aunt, wouldn't we, girls ?

GIRLS (*rather doubtfully*). Yes,—of—course !

INA (*looking at letter*). Wednesday afternoon ! Why, that's right now, and it's nearly train time ! You'll have to go right off, Polly !

POLLY. Yes, I'll have to see Miss Kitten at once. (*Starts to run out L. ; runs into Miss PRISCILLA KITTEN.*) Oh, Miss Kitten, I beg your pardon. I didn't see you !

MISS K. Miss Meredith, haven't I spoken to you several times in regard to running about the house ?

POLLY. Yes, ma'am.

MISS K. Then why do you persist in doing it ?

POLLY (*moving uneasily from one foot to the other*). Well, you see, I'm just sort of used to moving rapidly.

MISS K. Stand still ! Your manners and movements, Miss Meredith, pain me exceedingly. You are neither dignified nor ladylike. Don't you — Miss Meredith, look at me when I am speaking to you. You are not paying the slightest attention to what I am saying. What are you thinking of ?

POLLY. Shall I really tell you ?

MISS K. Yes, at once.

POLLY. Well, I was thinking how becoming purple is to you and wondering why you didn't wear it all the time.

MISS K. (*striving to look unconscious*). Dear me, Polly, you are—you are —— Where were you going, child, in such a hurry?

POLLY. I was going to find you, Miss Kitten. I wanted to see you as soon as I possibly could.

MISS K. I should say you succeeded. What did you want?

POLLY. Well, perhaps you had better read this right in here. (*Shows her the letter.*) Of course, you can read the whole of it if you would like to.

MISS K. Whom is this from? (*Turns it over.*) Oh, Martha. (*Reads letter.*) Why, it's to-day Miss Sampson is coming! It's almost time to meet her now!

POLLY (*eagerly*). Yes, ma'am! Can I go, Miss Kitten?

MISS K. Why, certainly, as Martha has requested it. You couldn't very well do any other way.

POLLY. Oh, Miss Kitten, *please* could I take Marion with me?

MISS K. No, indeed! It's bad enough to worry about what you will do yourself, let alone what you would influence Marion into doing. Now, listen to me. You will ride on the back seat, and wear a hat and not talk with John. I was completely overcome the other day when you returned from making that call on your father's school friend, to see you on the front seat, bareheaded, flourishing the whip and actually joking with John.

POLLY. Yes, ma'am. We did have a dandy time!

MISS K. Miss Meredith!

POLLY. Oh, I beg your pardon. I mean it was a delightful occasion.

MISS K. Well, it was one *not* to be repeated. You understand?

POLLY. Yes, ma'am. Miss Kitten, isn't John respectable?

MISS K. Why, certainly! Do you think I would employ a man who isn't respectable?

POLLY. Then, why oughtn't I to talk to him?

MISS K. Polly, is it possible that you haven't been taught that there are many men not your equals and not to be associated with?

POLLY. No, ma'am. Every man is your equal where I

came from. It wouldn't be healthy to tell a man he wasn't. If you did he'd feel for the six-shooter in his hip pocket and just naturally let daylight into you.

MISS K. Polly, you don't realize how extraordinary your language is. I can't keep you longer but I will endeavor to explain to you at the first opportunity. Go now, and please remember that Miss Sampson's impression of you is likely to be her impression of all the girls. My reputation is in your hands.

POLLY. Mercy! Well, I'll be very careful of it until I get Miss Sampson up here. Then I'll get safely away somewhere out of her sight, for by that time I'll probably be about ready to explode. [Polly exits, L. Girls are all laughing.

MISS K. Young ladies, Miss Meredith's remarks are anything but humorous. It is dreadful that so remarkable a girl should have been brought up in such an environment. I expect you to use your influence for her good. [Exit, R.

INA. Glory! The kitten's sense of humor is sadly blunted. I thought I should die!

LIL. So did I.

MAR. Wasn't she mean not to let me go?

HILDA. Isn't Polly the limit?

VIV. She's the greatest fun that ever struck this place. Come on, girls! There's loads of things to do for to-night.

(They take their books and papers. HILDA leaves a book on table. All exit L.)

Enter MISS K., r. She has a letter in her hand and is very much excited. She rings bell—sits down by table. ANNIE enters.

MISS K. Send Miss Harding to me at once. (ANNIE exits r. HILDA enters; starts toward table, sees Miss K., starts toward door, sees Miss H. coming—steps back of screen at back of room. MISS H. enters.) Miss Harding, will you be seated? I am very much upset. Very much upset! I have received an important business letter which calls me into Boston and I shall be obliged to remain away over night. There was never a time that I was so loth to leave the school. I will tell you frankly, Miss Harding, that I do not find you efficient.

MISS H. In what way have I failed, Miss Kitten?

MISS K. In your control over the girls. I was afraid you

were too young and inexperienced when you came. You are not filling Miss Blaine's place at all. I must give you warning that if there isn't a decided improvement in the junior division, I shall have to make a change at the Thanksgiving recess. Now, in regard to my being away to-night, I shall forbid all Hal-loween parties.

MISS H. Pardon me, Miss Kitten, but that seems to me the worst possible thing to do. The girls will be disappointed and likely to make up for their disappointment in some other way.

MISS K. It will be your duty to see that they do not succeed. Remember that I depend on you to keep the girls quiet and orderly. I shall speak to them before I leave.

(MISS K. exits L. MISS H. looks after her for a second, drops her head into her hands, then rises, takes a deep breath, exits R. HILDA comes forward, looks after Miss K. and exclaims, "Cat!" )

Enter INA, VIV., LIL. and MAR., R.

INA. Hilda!

VIV. Aren't you coming?

MAR. What are you doing?

HILDA. I came back to get my algebra. I left it on the table and I didn't want thirty lines extra for carelessness, and what do you suppose? Miss Kitten was sitting here actually looking at it, and she was so absorbed in her own affairs that she never noticed it. I tried to get out and almost walked into Miss Harding and there was nothing to do but dodge. Miss Kitten talked perfectly horrid to Miss Harding and told her if we didn't behave better that she would lose her position. As if Miss Harding was to blame! And, girls, after Miss Kitten went out, Miss Harding cried a little; I'm sure she did.

LIL. Isn't Miss Kitten mean?

MAR. Yes. Miss Harding is a dear. (*Bell rings.*)

VIV. Goodness, there's the assembly bell.

INA. What do you suppose has happened?

HILDA. I can tell you. The Cat is going away and she's afraid the mice will play, and she's going to forbid our Hal-loween fun.

ALL. What?

HILDA. Come on! You will hear the news when you get down there.

ALL (*talking as they exit*). How do you know? If that isn't the limit! The very idea! You'd think we were babies.

ANNIE enters, picks up some papers, places the chairs in position. Miss H. enters, R.

MISS H. Oh, are you here, Annie?

ANNIE. Sure I am, Miss Harding.

MISS H. I thought you were going to drop saying sure.

ANNIE. Sure I am. I mean I am, but it's that hard for me to rimimber. But don't yez think I does better?

MISS H. I think you do better.

ANNIE. Sure, that's right, I do! Oh, no, I mean—sure, is it any use for me to be tryin'?

MISS H. Yes, it is, Annie. It's everything for you to want to try. There's no reason why you shouldn't be educated just the same as the other girls. As soon as I can coach you up enough, I'm going to ask Miss Kitten to let you work your way through the school, that is, if I stay here myself.

ANNIE. If yez stay? Sure, what do you mean, Miss Harding?

MISS H. I shouldn't have spoken, Annie, but as I have, I suppose I might as well tell you. Miss Kitten is not satisfied with me and if things have not improved by Thanksgiving, I shall have to go. I'm afraid there will be no improvement.

ANNIE. Sure, it's a hathen she is entoirely. Don't yez care! Sure, it's easy another place yer'll git.

MISS H. That's just the trouble, Annie. I won't be able to get another position. It will be the wrong time of year. It isn't so much myself, but my mother is ill and she needs my help. If I have to go home at Thanksgiving and tell her that I have lost my position! (*Breaks down.*)

ANNIE. It's a howlin' shame, it is! Don't yez be after cryin', Miss Hardin'. Sure, and why ain't Miss Kitten satisfied?

MISS H. I can't manage the girls.

ANNIE. Sure, yez mean yer can't manage that whirlwind from out wist.

MISS H. You mustn't speak that way of Polly. She is a good friend to you, Annie.

ANNIE. Sure, she is that. Nixt ter yersilf, she's the best I ever had since I came here. She showed me how ter do me hair like this and gave me the ribbon, and she always acts as if I was a girl, too.

MISS H. Well, that's all you are, child. How old are you, anyway?

ANNIE. Sixteen.

MISS H. Well, if I have to go, I will do all I can to interest Miss Kitten in you.

ANNIE. Sure, it's broken-hearted I am if yez goes. (*Begins to cry.*) I'll nivir try ter learn nothib' more and I'll say sure all the time.

MISS H. There, Annie, you mustn't feel so. I have done wrong to talk to you, but I'm not so very old myself and sometimes it seems as if I must talk to some one or die. If I go, you must try all the more so that I can feel that I have done a little good here.

ANNIE. It's lots o' good yez done an' the girls think yez iligent. I've heard them say so. They'll do what yez want if yer asks them, Miss Harding.

MISS H. They will try to, but they don't think, and Miss Kitten is right. I don't know why I fail but I haven't much control over them. We won't talk any more about it, and you must be careful, child, not to repeat the foolish things I say to you.

ANNIE. Sure, it's mum as an oyster I'll be, Miss Harding, an' maybe I kin be after helpin' yez. Sure, wouldn't it be jist iligint if I could?

MISS H. It *sure* would, Annie, and it sure would be just elegant if you would try to say just one sentence as I have taught you. I should feel that my labors were not wholly in vain.

ANNIE (*very slowly*). You—know—that—you—are—helping—me—and—that—I—am—improving.

MISS H. Bravo! You see how nicely you can do when you try.

ANNIE. Sure I kin, but ain't it the hard work?

MISS H. I suppose it is, dear, but the things worth working for are usually the hardest. [They exit, L.

Enter HILDA, LIL., INA, MAR. and Viv. HILDA speaks as she enters.

HILDA. I don't care, Lillian! You're so awfully proper about everything and afraid to say your soul's your own, but I'm not afraid to speak my mind.

MAR. Nor I. Miss Kitten is just as mean as she can be.

LIL. Girls, she probably thinks it is best.

INA. Oh, fiddlesticks !

VIV. Supposing she is going away. Miss Harding is here !

MAR. Any one would think this was a kindergarten instead of a school for young ladies.

INA. Young ladies ! Oh, don't make me laugh !

LIL. This may not be a kindergarten but the way you are discussing things is decidedly childish.

VIV. Oh, don't worry, Miss Propriety, we will all sit and twiddle our thumbs this evening.

HILDA. Or do some knitting.

MAR. Or a fine piece of hemstitching while you sit quite erect in a chair without arms, with both dainty tootsies placed squarely upon the floor and —

LIL. I presume, Miss Esterbrook, that you imagine that you are witty. Don't you think that I am disappointed, too ? And think of Polly Ann !

INA. I know it ! Just think ! Never went to a Hallowe'en party !

*Enter ANNIE, L., with a box.*

ANNIE. Miss Winthrop, here's a package for yez.

[*Exit, L.*

VIV. (*taking the box up*). A package ? Oh, from Hayden ! The dominoes !

HILDA. A pile of good they will do us now.

VIV. I wish they hadn't sent the old things.

*Enter POLLY, R.*

POLLY. Oh, girls ! Girls ! You never can guess what I bought for you.

HILDA. Goodness, Polly, I don't see how you could have bought anything. You didn't go over to the Center, did you ?

POLLY. No, I bought it in the station.

ALL. In the station ?

POLLY. Yes. Drop a penny in the slot ! Push the lever and out it comes. (*Holds up a package of gum.*)

ALL. Gum !

LIL. Polly Meredith, you know Miss Kitten is death on gum !

POLLY. Land sakes, Lillian, I didn't buy it for Miss Kitten. It's for you. Step right up, ladies. Now's your chance. Get your nice fresh chewing-gum !

INA. Hush ! Your voice would raise the dead !  
MAR. (*holding out her hands*). Catch, Polly ?

(POLLY throws her a piece. *Passes it around to the other girls.*)

VIV. Goodness, girls, keep one eye on the door.

LIL. Girls !

POLLY. Lily, don't you like to chew gum ? Be honest, now !

LIL. Well, yes, but ——

POLLY. Then, have a piece !

INA. Don't I love gum !

POLLY. Isn't it just heavenly to be doing something we ought not to do ?

LIL. You won't think it's so heavenly if you're caught.

VIV. Did Martha's aunt come ?

POLLY. Yes ; and, girls, she is a funny little thing and dressed so queer ; but she's a perfect little duck ! Promise you will be nice to her, girls. I'm sure she isn't the least bit like any of your folks, and I don't know how she will strike you.

MAR. Of course we will be nice if we can do it in a perfectly decorous way.

HILDA. Oh, Polly, what do you think ? Miss Kitten is going up to Boston to stay over night and she has forbidden us to have our party.

POLLY. She has ? Well, can't we have it some other night after she gets back ?

MAR. A Hallowe'en party some other night !

VIV. The charms wouldn't work.

LIL. Would you expect on any other night in the year to walk around a room backward holding a mirror in your hand, and have your future husband look over your shoulder and you see his face in the mirror ?

POLLY. Glory be ! I wasn't expecting to do any such stunt as that to-night, say nothing of any other night. Is that the kind of things you do on Hallowe'en ? Jiminy ! I don't know but what I am glad that we can't do it. If my future husband looks like the husbands of most of the ladies I know, I'd rather not see him until I have to.

INA. Girls, quick ! Swallow your gum ! Miss Kitten is coming !

MAR. No, no ! Don't do that ! It will kill you !

LIL. Why didn't you speak sooner! I've swallowed mine!  
Oh, will I die? Will I die?

HILDA. Hush!

*Enter Miss K., r.*

MISS K. I thought Miss Harding was here. Miss Sinclair, will you be kind enough to tell Miss Harding that I wish to speak to her?

INA. Yes'm.

[*Exit INA, l.*

MISS K. Miss Meredith, I presume Miss Sampson arrived?

POLLY. Yes, ma'am. Annie took her up to her room and I was to go up in a few minutes and bring her down to meet you.

MISS K. You may bring her down now if you please. I expect that you will all do everything in your power to make it pleasant for Miss Sampson. Entertain her in any way that you think will be pleasing to her. I would suggest some recitations and music this evening, and remember that I expect you to uphold the dignity and reputation of our school. (*Girls exeunt, r., as Miss H. enters l.*) Miss Harding, Martha Price's aunt is here and she will go on to Martha's home to-morrow. It will be for you to entertain her, and I wish her to receive a correct and favorable impression of the Tracy School. I wish once more to impress upon you the fact that order is to be rigidly maintained during my absence. I have absolutely forbidden any Hallowe'en parties. The seniors are to be trusted. It is among the freshmen and juniors only that there is likely to be any trouble.

*Enter POLLY r. with MISS BEDELIA KITTEN. MISS K. starts up in astonishment. Unseen by the others, BED. places her fingers on her lips.*

POLLY. Miss Kitten, this is Martha Price's aunt, Miss Sampson.

MISS K. (*very much upset*). I am very glad, I'm sure. Let—let me present Miss Harding.

MISS H. Miss Sampson, I am very glad to meet you. In Miss Kitten's absence I shall be very glad to help Martha's friends make your visit an enjoyable one.

BED. Thank you, my dear, thank you. I know I shall have a real entertaining time. This is the first time I was ever in a place like this and I like it so much already, I don't believe I shall want to be in any hurry to leave.

Miss H. We will see you after Miss Kitten goes. Polly will remain within call, Miss Kitten.

Miss K. Very well. (*POLLY and Miss H. exeunt, l.*)  
*Bedelia! (Greets her sister.)*

BED. Yes, Priscilla, I suppose you are surprised.

MISS K. Never more so in my life. Why didn't you let me know you were coming? And why in the world did you let Polly think you were Martha Price's aunt?

BED. Well, now I will tell you, Priscilla. You know I agreed to visit you sure this year. Uncle Ebenezer was called to New York last week and there I was all alone and I just thought this was the best chance I ever had to visit you, and then I thought how nice it would be to surprise you, so along I came. Wal, I was surprised when that little girl came flying up to me when I got off the train and wanted to know if I was coming here. When I told her I was, she was just about tickled to death and she said she knew the minute she saw me that I was Martha's aunt. Then I knew there was some mistake but it just seemed real entertaining to be taken for some one else and just for to-night, Priscilla, I want to be Martha's aunt.

MISS K. Of all the extraordinary things, but, then, that's just like you, Bedelia. I'm sure I don't know whether it's just the thing or not, but I can't see what possible harm —

BED. Harm, of course not! Where could it be? What did that young woman mean about your going away?

MISS K. Why, I have been called up to Boston and shall have to stay over night. I hated to go, as Miss Harding is young and inexperienced, and my assistant principal is seriously ill, but I feel better now that you are here. Although if you persist in masquerading as Martha's aunt, I shall begin to think that you are as irresponsible as the girls.

BED. Now, don't you worry a bit, Priscilla. I'll look out for things for you if there's anything to look out for, and I'm sure I shall have a real entertaining time.

*Enter Miss H., l..*

MISS H. Miss Kitten, John is waiting, and I'm really afraid you will miss your train if you don't start.

MISS K. Yes, yes, of course! Miss—er—Sampson, you will be here in the morning?

BED. Ah, yes, I won't go until after you come back. Now don't you worry a bit. This young lady here is going to help me have a real entertaining time.

(*They exit L. as she speaks.*)

*Enter INA and POLLY, L.*

INA. Oh, she's gone! Gone! Gone! (*Runs to R. exit.*) Girls! Girls! (*HILDA, MAR., VIV. and LIL. enter R.*) She's gone, girls.

POLLY. Yes, the cat's away! The cat's away!

MAR. A lot of good that will do us.

VIV. Oh, Polly, do you suppose Lillian will die?

POLLY. Die? Oh, the gum! I had forgotten!

LIL. Who told you, Marion, that it would kill any one to swallow gum?

MAR. I don't just remember who it was, but I've always known it.

INA. Yes, so have I.

POLLY. Do you feel as if you would die, Lillian?

LIL. Oh, I don't know. I have awfully queer feelings right along here (*running her finger along her chest*), and sometimes here (*feeling of her neck*), and then way down here.

(*Places her hand on her side.*)

POLLY. Goodness, a chew of gum wouldn't sail around that way!

VIV. It might. Don't you know, a needle will work all around until it reaches a fatal spot, and perhaps gum might.

LIL. Oh, girls, I shall go crazy.

POLLY. We will tell Miss Harding and have a doctor.

LIL. I guess you won't, not until I'm sure that I'm dying, anyway. Do you suppose I'm going to have her tell Miss Kitten that I was chewing gum? I'd die then sure!

POLLY. Well, can't you take something? Some—some—peppermint!

HILDA. Or checkerberry!

INA. Or ginger tea!

MAR. My grandmother used to have a dandy remedy for anything under the sun. It was—er—pennyroyal!

VIV. (*to LIL.*). Which will you take?

LIL. Oh, I don't know. Supposing I take a little of each, but how will I get it?

POLLY (*ringing bell*). Annie will get it for you.

A.L.L. Sure!

*Enter ANNIE, L.*

POLLY. Annie, Lillian doesn't feel well and she needs something to take. Will you get it for her?

ANNIE. Sure, miss!

HILDA. But, Annie, she doesn't want any one to know she isn't feeling well, because—because—

INA. Because we're going to have *cream puffs* for supper and she's afraid they won't let her have any.

LIL. You won't tell, will you?

ANNIE. I'll git it for yez mesilf, miss. What'll I git?

POLLY. One teaspoonful of peppermint —

HILDA. One of checkerberry —

INA. One of Jamaica ginger —

MAR. And one of pennyroyal.

VIV. In a cup of hot water.

ANNIE. I'll bring it up here to yez. It's piperment, checkerberry, ginger, and—and —

MAR. Pennyroyal.

ANNIE. Pinny-ryal! In a cup of hot water.

ALL. Right, oh! [Exit ANNIE, l.

POLLY. We will have you fixed up in no time, Lily. What's this? (Takes up box.)

VIV. Oh, the dominoes that we were going to wear to-night.

HILDA. Isn't it maddening?

POLLY. Why didn't you open it?

MAR. What's the use?

POLLY. Well, I never saw one. I can at least feast mine eyes. Do you care if I look at them, Vivi?

VIV. Of course not. Open it if you like.

(POLLY opens box. Girls are not interested enough to watch her.)

POLLY. Oh, girls, aren't they lovely? Why, you said they were like sheets!

MAR. Well, they are. Why, what?

POLLY. Yes, I should think so. (Takes a costume from box.) Did you ever see a pink satin sheet?

ALL (gathering around box). What? Just look! For pity's sake!

POLLY. Aren't they dominoes?

VIV. Goodness, no!

HILDA. They've made a mistake and sent a box of fancy costumes.

INA. I guess the ones that get our dominoes will be pleased.

MAR. There are even masks here.

VIV. They sent some dominoes after all. Two, just alike.

LIL. (*holding up a costume*). Oh, wouldn't I love to try this one on !

MAR. Let's put them on !

POLLY. Let's have a party.

LIL. Why, Polly, Miss Kitten forbid us to —

POLLY. Have a *Hallowe'en* party.

INA. That's right ! She didn't say we couldn't have some other kind.

MAR. And if we use these it will be a fancy-dress party.

LIL. Girls, you are crazy ! Miss Harding won't let us.

HILDA. Have it in my room and Miss Harding will never know.

VIV. She will be busy entertaining Martha's aunt.

LIL. Aren't we supposed to help entertain Miss Sampson ?

MAR. Yes, recite and sing and show off our manners or some such thing.

POLLY. It won't take long to show her all the stunts we know.

INA. You bet it won't !

MAR. Come on, girls ! Will you do it ?

ALL. (*except LIL.*). Sure !

HILDA. Oh, Lily, be game ! Come on !

LIL. Well, of course if all the rest of you want to —

ALL. We sure do ! (*ANNIE enters with a cup which she places on the table.*) Good girl, Annie !

ANNIE. It's all there but the ryal-pinny, Miss Martin. There weren't none o' that in the midicine chist. [*Exit, l.*

LIL. Oh, girls, I may not live long enough to have a party.

MAR. Oh, perhaps you will, Lily. Hurry up and take that.

VIV. Remember, girls, we stand together in this to-night.

POLLY. Sure ! Now, girls (*LIL. sits down at table. Others stand in a row, arms around each other*), in the words of the famous " Musketeers " —

ALL. " All for each " and " Each for all ! "

LIL. (*taking one swallow of her medicine*). Murder !

(*Jumps up, claps her hand over her mouth, sinks down in chair again, while the girls gather around, fanning her and so forth, as the curtain falls.*)

## ACT II

### SCENE.—*The same.*

(As curtain rises, LIL., MAR., POLLY, VIV. and HILDA sit about the table looking up at INA who stands on a chair in the center of the room.)

INA. Ladies, friends, schoolmates and fellow citizens, we are met together on this grand and glorious occasion, this Hallowe'en evening I might say, this thirty-first evening in October 19— to do honor to an esteemed relative of one of our own numbers. A cherished member of our own glorious class of 19—. The class which is the pride of Tracy Institute and whose fame will be recorded in letters of red, white and blue upon the annals of these great and glorious United States. (*Girls applaud.*) I appeal to you, fellow classmates, uphold the honor of Tracy Institute and don't, I implore, bring shame upon the fair name of Kitten.

ALL (*laugh and applaud*). Hurrah ! You're it ! Three cheers for class orator.

VIV. It's a good thing you have shown us what you can do, INA.

MAR. That's right. We never should even have suspected it.

INA. I always knew that you didn't appreciate my talents.

HILDA. Didn't we just distinguish ourselves at dinner ?

INA. We certainly did.

VIV. I wouldn't have believed that Polly could be so lady-like.

POLLY. Oh, leave it to me. I can be most anything I choose if it comes to a pinch.

MAR. Miss Kitten's heart would have palpitated with joy could she have beheld her darling precious.

LIL. (*is decidedly nervous*). Oh, girls, I feel awfully queer.

INA. I should think you might.

VIV. I guess any of us would if we had eaten seven cream puffs for supper.

LIL. Oh, Vivi, I never !

MAR. You came pretty close to it. I counted four.

LIL. Well, if I die, you girls will be sorry you mentioned cream p-p-p-puffs. (*Begins to cry.*)

INA. There, Lillian, we didn't mean anything.

ALL. Of course not !

POLLY. Lil, do you really feel very bad ?

LIL. Yes.

HILDA. I think we ought to have a doctor.

LIL. No, I won't !

MAR. My goodness, what shall we do ?

POLLY. I'll tell you. We'll ask Miss Sampson when she comes in.

ALL. Oh, yes !

VIV. You won't mind if we tell her, will you, Lily ?

LIL. No. She's a dear.

MAR. Say, girls, how shall we decide on our costumes ?

HILDA. No one ought to know what any one but you have herself.

VIV. Glory, Hilda, do you know what you are trying to tell ?

MAR. Oh, don't be fussy. We know what she means.

INA. When we get ready to go up-stairs, we will pass through this room, one at a time, and each choose a costume and put it on in our own room.

ALL. Right, oh !

POLLY. Shan't we ask any of the other girls ?

ALL. No !

INA. We would be caught sure if we had them coming up here from other parts of the building.

HILDA. Perhaps the freshmen aren't wrathy to have their first chance for a school frolic spoiled.

POLLY. Oh, what's the use ? It was my first chance, but I'm not complaining.

MAR. Mother's angel child !

INA. Polly, how did you get in the junior class ? I mean, where did you learn enough ? Did you have schools near the ranch ?

POLLY. The nearest school is twenty miles. Dad taught me.

MAR. Why, I thought he ran a ranch and was a sheriff or something.

POLLY. He does and he is. Sheriff of Rockbound County,

but he knows something just the same. He graduated from Harvard.

ALL. He did?

POLLY. Yes; that's why he sent me east. My cousin came, too, and he's out at Harvard now. He's coming to the Junior Dance.

ALL. What?

POLLY. Yes, when you told me about it, I wrote and asked him if he felt too big to come to our dance, and he wrote back that it would be the time of his life and he wanted at least five dances with Lillian.

VIV. And you've actually invited a Harvard man to our dance?

MAR. And never mentioned it!

POLLY. Well, I forgot to. You'll like him. He's some fellow. Out west they call him "Broncho Kid," but here he's only Thomas Meredith.

LIL. (*very much agitated*). How—how did he happen to mention me?

POLLY. I sent him that snap-shot I took of you and he wears it in his watch, and he says every time the fellows see it, they all go woozy.

LIL. Polly Meredith, oh—oh—I feel so queer! I'm afraid I'll never live to see him. I—I—I think I'm dying now!

ALL. Oh, Lil! What shall we do?

VIV. Polly, you never saw any one die, did you?

POLLY. Well, not a natural death, but, then, if Lillian died from swallowing her gum, that wouldn't be a natural death, would it?

MAR. Polly Ann, you never saw any one die an *unnatural* death, did you?

POLLY. Yes, I saw a man hanged once but I was so far away I don't know how he looked. (*Girls scream.*)

HILDA. Sh! Hush!

*Enter Miss H., with BED.*

MISS H. Girls, Miss Burke has been taken suddenly ill and they have sent for me to go over to the west wing. That leaves you alone in this wing and also leaves Miss Sampson in your hands to entertain.

BED. We shall get along fine, Miss Harding; don't you worry a bit! I'm sure we shall have a real entertaining time.

And if you need any help, don't you hesitate to let me know. I'm real handy in case of sickness.

MISS H. Thank you. I hope to find that it is nothing serious. [Exit, R.

POLLY. Oh, Miss Sampson, do you know anything that will cure gum-swallowing?

BED. Cure what?

POLLY. Gum-swallowing.

MAR. You see, Lillian accidentally swallowed her gum.

VIV. Do you think she will die?

LIL. Do you, Miss Sampson?

BED. For the land sakes, no!

ALL. She won't?

BED. Of course not!

MAR. I've always heard it would kill you to swallow your gum.

BED. Well, it's perfect nonsense.

INA. But Lillian has been feeling awfully queer.

BED. I suppose you have frightened the poor child almost to death. I don't quite understand how any of Priscilla Kitten's girls happened to be chewing gum.

POLLY (*quickly*). Oh, it was my fault. When I went to the station to meet you I got some in the gum machine. We were all chewing it and some one said "Miss Kitten!" Well, I'm pretty quick in my movements but when Lillian hears the name Kitten, she has me beaten to a frazzle as far as rapidity goes. She had swallowed her gum before we could stop her.

BED. Supposing it had been a case that the gum had killed her, you would have been responsible for a schoolmate's death.

POLLY (*moving toward LIL.*). Goodness, I never thought of that.

BED. That would have been rather a poor excuse if Lillian had died, wouldn't it?

POLLY (*hugging LIL. close*). Yes, ma'am, I reckon it would.

LIL. Oh, I don't mind, really, Polly, as long as I am going to live for the Junior Dance.

HILDA. Girls, we are supposed to be entertaining Miss Sampson.

ALL. That's right.

MAR. Delightful evening, Miss Sampson, isn't it?

VIV. I trust, Miss Sampson, that you are enjoying your sojourn in our midst.

HILDA. Oh, Miss Sampson, have you seen the picture of Miss Kitten's father? He left the money and plans for this school. It's named for him. His name was Tracy Kitten. Classy name, wasn't it? I suppose Kitten was too utterly ridiculous for the name of a select seminary.

(*She shows BED. a picture at the back of the room.*)

INA. Gee, ain't this awful?

LIL. I suppose it's about time we began to recite or something.

POLLY. Girls, let's have our party now!

ALL. What?

POLLY. Why not? We can have it here, too!

INA. That's right, we can!

MAR. Goodness, what will Miss Sampson think?

VIV. Think it's more fun than to be sitting around here like sticks.

INA. And we can do our stunts after we are dressed up.

LIL. You don't suppose we will get Miss Harding into trouble, do you? You know what Hilda said about her losing her position.

MAR. Miss Harding can't help what we do when she isn't here.

VIV. And we certainly shan't tell Miss Kitten anything about this anyway.

ALL. Right, oh!

POLLY. Oh, Miss Sampson, we were going to have a little party — (*BED. comes forward.*)

MAR. We have some costumes down from Boston.

VIV. And wouldn't you like it if we dressed up and did some stunts for you and had our party just the same?

BED. Well, I should say so! It will be real entertaining, only I think I should like to dress up, too.

ALL. Oh, Miss Sampson, you're a dear! Won't that be fun! You're all right!

BED. Well, I declare, I feel about sixteen.

LIL. We'll all go out but you, Hilda. You and Miss Sampson can choose and then you can help her dress.

HILDA. All right. (*Girls exeunt R., leaving HILDA and BED. on the stage.*) Now, you choose something, Miss Sampson, and a mask.

(*HILDA opens box.*)

BED. Well, I declare ! I believe I'll take this. (*Takes a domino from box.*) If this ain't real entertaining !

HILDA. You've got a domino ! I'll take this. (*Takes a costume.*) All right, girls ! [They exit, L.]

(*The girls enter one at a time, choose a costume and exit, L. Hilda calls "Ready!" or "All right!" as they exit L. Polly is the last to enter. ANNIE enters L. as Polly is selecting her costume.*)

ANNIE. Sure, Miss Meredith, what is it yez all up to ?

POLLY. We're going to have a party, Annie, because it's Hallowe'en and we're choosing our costumes. Oh, Annie, don't you want to come ?

ANNIE. Me, miss ? To the party ?

POLLY. Sure ! Wouldn't you like it ?

ANNIE. Like it ? Sure, Miss Polly, I niver went to a party in me loife !

POLLY. Well, it's time you did. Come on ! Choose something ! And a mask ! The girls will never notice that we are one too many or if they do, it will be all the more fun, for they will be completely mystified. But don't try to talk, Annie ; your brogue would be a dead give away.

(*They dress on the stage, putting the costumes over their other dresses.*)

ANNIE. I can talk all right, Miss Meredith, when I think about it and take plenty of time.

POLLY. Well, I should say you could. Where did you learn ?

ANNIE. Miss Harding is teaching me evenings when she has time.

POLLY. She is ? Isn't that splendid ?

ANNIE. Ain't—isn't she the dear ?

POLLY. She's all of that. Oh, look what I've found !

ANNIE. What is it, miss ?

POLLY. A false mustache, and look at the slouch hat and the coat ! Oh, say, I'll put them here (*slipping them under a large chair at L. of stage*), and we'll have some fun yet. Annie, they'll never know you from Adam. How do I look ?

ANNIE. Jest iligant.

POLLY. I wonder if the girls are ready ? I'm going to see.

(*Runs out L.*)

*Enter Miss H., r., medicine bottle in her hand.*

MISS H. Well, what in the world?

ANNIE. It's only me, Miss Hardin'.

MISS H. What *are* you doing, Annie?

ANNIE. Sure, the young ladies are having a party —

MISS H. Are they indeed?

ANNIE. Sure, it's Hallow somethin', Miss Polly said it is, and she invited me. Ain't that jist like her?

MISS H. (*dryly*). Yes, exactly.

ANNIE. Sure, Miss Harding, don't yez think I ought to be with them?

MISS H. Your being with them is no harm, Annie. If you have a chance to have a little fun there's no reason why you shouldn't have it. Where is Miss Sampson?

ANNIE. Sure, is she the queer little party that's visitin' here?

MISS H. Annie, I'm surprised!

ANNIE. Sure, I beg your pardon, Miss Hardin'. I thought she was queer but probably she ain't. She's with Miss Mason. She's dressing up, too.

MISS H. Miss Sampson is dressing up?

ANNIE. Yes'm. Ain't she the game one?

MISS H. (*not noticing ANNIE's remark*). No doubt she thinks it's real entertaining. I came up for some medicine for Miss Burke. I shall be back for the night in a very few minutes. If the girls get too noisy, Annie, you had better speak to me.

ANNIE. All right, Miss Harding, I will.

[*Exit Miss H., r.*

*Enter girls and BED., l., in fancy costumes and masks.*

MAR. (*leading the way*). This way! This way for the side show! Step right up! Get your tickets at the box-office. Reserved seats only ten cents extra.

(A varied program may be introduced of music, songs, recitations, dances. Each girl tries hard to conceal her identity. At the close of each number, the girls guess who the performer is—some should be recognized—others remain a mystery.)

BED. (*at the close of the program*). Well, girls, I never had such an entertaining time in my life. I wish I could entertain

you but I can't. I can't even disguise my voice. There's just one thing more. Do any of you know the song "Bedelia"? If you do, I'd love to hear it.

ANNIE (*slowly*). I know the song, if some one can play it.

(*One of the girls goes to the piano and ANNIE sings "Bedelia," the girls joining in the chorus. No one but POLLY knows who she is.*)

HILDA (*pointing at ANNIE*). Lillian!

(*ANNIE shakes her head.*)

MAR. Polly!

(*ANNIE shakes her head.*)

BED. (*to ANNIE*). My dear, I don't know which young lady you are, but you have given me the most pleasure of all, although it's all been splendid and you're just a wonderful crowd of girls.

POLLY. Three cheers for the vocal mystery!

INA. And now for some eats!

ALL. Hurrah!

(*They exit, l. BED. starts to go with them. As she gets to door, she glances back. MISS K. enters, r. BED. comes back into room.*)

BED. Well, well, Priscilla, you got back to-night after all!

MISS K. Bedelia Kitten, what in pity's name are you doing?

BED. I'm having a real entertaining time, Priscilla.

MISS K. Yes, you have every appearance of it.

BED. Well, I suppose I do look ridiculous but you see the girls have been having a party, and —

MISS K. Oh, have they?

BED. Land sakes, you don't mind, do you? They sang and recited and I don't know what all. It was real entertaining.

MISS K. It isn't that, Bedelia. I'm glad the girls have entertained you. The point is this. I forbid them to have a party. They have disobeyed my orders.

BED. Oh, I see. Well, now, Priscilla, I wouldn't be too hard on them. It's Hallowe'en, you know, and they are just kind of young and thoughtless.

MISS K. I understand all that, but you wouldn't have me pass it over without a word, would you?

BED. Well, I suppose you couldn't do that exactly, but—  
but —

MISS K. Where is Miss Harding?

BED. One of the teachers is sick and she is with her. Land, Priscilla, you don't blame her, do you?

MISS K. To a certain extent. If she had any control over the girls, they wouldn't be ready to carry on this way, the minute her back is turned. I have known for some time that she wasn't fit for her position here. I'll just step up to my room and then I will straighten things out. [Exit, r.

BED. (following her). Well, now, Priscilla —

(Burglar enters L., black mustache, slouch hat, gray coat. Looks about uncertainly, listens—moves along by the wall. MISS H. enters r.; he sneaks out r., unseen by her. She hesitates, finally goes to box, takes out domino, puts it on, exits l. LIL. enters l., looks back, listens, carefully takes a mirror from folds of her dress—begins to walk around room backward. ANNIE enters l., without mask.)

LIL. Oh, Annie, how you startled me! (Looks at her costume in surprise.) For goodness' sake, it was you that sang "Bedelia"!

ANNIE. Sure, it was that. What is it yez doin' now, miss?

LIL. Promise you won't tell, Annie?

ANNIE. Sure, miss, mum's the word!

LIL. Well, on Hallowe'en you can walk backwards around a dimly lighted room with a mirror in your hand, and you will see the face of your future husband in the mirror.

ANNIE. You don't say, miss!

LIL. I don't want the girls to know, but I'm bound to try it. You keep watch and tell me if they are coming, will you?

ANNIE. Sure, miss. Yez better hurry for they are all over the place.

LIL. Oh, I'm so nervous. (She turns the light down and begins to walk around backwards. ANNIE runs over to chair at l., puts on the coat, mustache and hat—steals up back of LIL. and looks over her shoulder into mirror. LIL. screams—ANNIE dodges back of screen. Girls enter l., in general confusion. ANNIE slips out l. unseen by others.) Oh! Oh! Oh, I saw a man's face.

ALL. Where?

LIL. In the mirror. Polly, your cousin hasn't got a mustache, has he?

POLLY. My cousin? A mustache? Glory be, he's only eighteen!

INA. Do you mean to say that you saw a face in that mirror?

LIL. Yes, black mustache, and a slouch hat! Oh, I was so scared!

(POLLY, unnoticed by others, runs over to chair at L., looks under, finds the things gone, laughs silently.)

HILDA. Well, you were looking for a face, weren't you?

LIL. Yes, but I didn't really expect to see one.

MAR. You didn't see one either. You were excited and you imagined it.

LIL. Oh, did I? Well, I guess if it had been you, you wouldn't have thought there was much imagining about it.

INA. Girls, if Lil really did see a face, she saw a real face. You all know there's nothing in Hallowe'en stunts but fun. There must be a man in the house.

VIV. Probably he's a burglar!

(Miss H. enters unseen by the girls. When she sees the girls, she quickly slips a mask on.)

MAR. Oh, what shall we do?

HILDA (noticing Miss H.). Oh, Miss Sampson, tell us what to do quick!

INA. We think there's a burglar in the house!

MAR. Lillian saw him in here!

LIL. Yes, black hair and mustache! Most awful looking man!

VIV. Oh, I'm so scared!

MISS H. Get John! Come quick!

[All exit, L., but POLLY.

POLLY (looking about). Annie! Annie! Wonder where she is. (BED. enters, R.) Why, why, Miss Sampson, I—I—thought you just went out that door. (Points L.)

BED. Land sakes, child, what made you think that?

POLLY. Well, it—it—was dressed just the same—(Looks in box.) Yes, sir! Some one has the other domino on! Another joke on the girls. Oh, isn't this fun?

BED. Yes, it's real entertaining. Of course Miss Kitten was perfectly willing that you should have a Hallowe'en party.

POLLY. This isn't a Hallowe'en party. What—(*hesitating*) what made you ask about Miss Kitten?

BED. Well, I didn't think anything about it at first, but it just occurred to me that she might not like to have you doing this when she is away.

POLLY. Well, I don't know as she would like it, but what she doesn't know won't hurt her.

BED. So that's your code of honor! Do when Miss Kitten isn't looking what you wouldn't do if she was.

POLLY. Goodness, that doesn't sound so very nice, does it?

BED. No, I don't think it does, and I must say I'm surprised. Why, I thought you and those other girls that have been giving me such an entertaining time were just the nicest girls in the world.

POLLY. Oh, don't mention the other girls, Miss Sampson. They had this party just because I suggested it. Somehow they always do what I suggest.

BED. So I have noticed. I guess you are a pretty dangerous girl to have in a place like this.

POLLY. Oh, Miss Sampson, I wish you wouldn't say that, because I do like you ever so much. We're just having some fun.

BED. Child, would your mother want you to have fun that you gained by deceiving others?

POLLY. I've never had any mother, Miss Sampson. My mother died when I was born. Dad always said I was a hopeless case so he sent me on here to see what Miss Kitten could do with me. He said he didn't know how gray her hair was when I started, but he knew how gray it would be by the time I returned. You see, dad's never had any one but just me for a good many years, and I reckon he's always let me do about as I please and we never either of us thought whether I ought to or not.

BED. Polly, some people think that those in the other world who love us can see us and know what we are doing. Supposing, just supposing that is true, would you want your mother to see all that you do?

POLLY. I reckon not, Miss Sampson. Not by a good deal. I never thought of it before. But what am I going to do? I'm just me and I guess it would be a pretty hard me to change.

BED. We don't want to change her entirely for she's a pretty nice little me, but, Polly, it's time you changed enough to stop leading the other girls into trouble. If Miss Kitten should find out about this, you would all have to face the consequences, and yet you admit yourself that you are to blame.

POLLY. Yes, I am.

BED. If Miss Kitten knew about this, Miss Harding would probably lose her position.

POLLY. Why should she?

BED. Miss Kitten left her in charge.

POLLY. But she isn't here, and how can she be to blame?

BED. That argument might not have much weight with Miss Kitten.

POLLY. Oh, misery! I love Miss Harding and I wouldn't get her into trouble for the world. What shall I do? I never thought about these things before.

BED. That's what I am trying to impress upon you, how your thoughtlessness gets others into trouble. I don't believe this is the first time since you came either.

POLLY. No, ma'am, I don't believe it is. Goodness, I never thought before, but I guess I've been to blame for lots of things. Gracious, I didn't even realize I was to blame. I guess it would be a good thing if I went back on the ranch.

BED. Would you want to do that?

POLLY. I—I reckon not. Not until I have proved that I am good for something here. But how am I ever going to remember to remember?

BED. (*taking a little ring from her finger*). Polly, this was my mother's ring. The dearest, most generous, self-sacrificing little woman that ever lived. (*Puts it on POLLY's finger.*) Wear her ring and look at it every hour in the day and remember!

POLLY. Have you faith enough in me for that?

BED. Yes, Polly.

POLLY. I'll never go back on you, Miss Sampson. I'll remember if I die in the attempt. Gracious, I wish you were my aunt. I don't wonder that Martha Price is such a nice girl.

(*Bell rings.*)

BED. What is that?

POLLY. The telephone. I'll answer it. (Polly exits R.,

BED. L. *Burglar enters L., exits R., drops a pocketbook.*  
 ANNIE *runs in L., tears off hat, mustache and begins to take costume off.* POLLY *enters R.)* Annie, what's the matter?

ANNIE. Sure, miss, the girls are chasing me. They'll git me for sure. Miss Kitten has got back and if she's after finding out, I'll lose me job.

POLLY. Annie, quick, give them to me! (*Snatches up hat and mustache.*) They'll never know. Now, you scoot. (*POLLY throws cover on costume box as ANNIE exits R.* Miss H. *enters L., followed by LIL., MAR., VIV., HILDA, followed by BED. and Miss K.* POLLY *dances around waving hat and mustache.*) Ever get left? Ever get left? Joke's on you! Joke's on you!

GIRLS. Polly Meredith! Well, of all things!

LIL. Polly Ann, it was you who looked in the mirror?

POLLY (*holding up hat and mustache*). Isn't this what you saw?

LIL. Yes, and to think of the fright I had! (*Sees Miss K.*) Oh, Miss Kitten!

GIRLS (*horrified*). And Miss Harding!

MISS K. Well, Miss Meredith, I trust you have enjoyed yourself this evening. In fact I trust that all of the young ladies have had an enjoyable time, for what will follow will not prove quite so enjoyable.

POLLY. Miss Kitten, don't blame the girls. It's all my fault.

GIRLS. Oh, no, it isn't! The idea! Don't you believe her, Miss Kitten?

MISS K. That will do. I have heard quite enough. We will settle this burglar affair of yours first. If you think you have masqueraded long enough, kindly return my pocketbook and we will talk of something more sensible.

POLLY. Your pocketbook? Do you think that I have your pocketbook?

MISS K. I saw you take it.

MISS H. What is this?

(*Picks up pocketbook.*)

POLLY. I never saw that before in my life.

MISS H. Polly, when Miss Kitten returned I met her in the upper hall. When she opened the door of her room, we saw you run from her bureau out the opposite door and you had her pocketbook in your hand. Now what have you to say?

POLLY (*looking at the door where ANNIE made her exit*). Nothing, Miss Harding. Miss Kitten, you can't think I meant to steal your money?

MISS K. No, I can't think that, for you certainly have money enough of your own. I suppose it is all a part of this crazy escapade of yours, but I must say I think you have pretty thoroughly forgotten yourself to enter my room in my absence and rifle my bureau. I think the only course open to me is to inform your father of what has happened and let him change you to some other school.

POLLY. Oh, must you tell dad?

(INA *rushes in L.*)

INA. Oh, Miss Sampson! Girls! Oh, g-g-g-goodness, Miss Kitten!

MISS K. What is it? What has happened?

INA. Why—why—J-J-John has got here at last and he found the burglar in the garden under the hall window. He fell and broke his leg when he climbed out and he was trying to get away and John heard him. He had a black mustache and a gray coat and slouch hat.

ALL. Then there was a burglar in the house!

MISS H. And he dropped the pocketbook when he came through here.

MISS K. Well, Polly, I'm certainly relieved.

POLLY. Jiminy, Miss Kitten, so am I!

MISS H. But, Polly, why didn't you explain?

POLLY (*uneasily*). Why, why—I—well—you see, you said you saw me.

MISS K. Well, certainly, Polly, you are the most extraordinary girl!

POLLY. Oh, Miss Kitten, won't you let me take the blame for everything? I got the girls to have the party, and, oh, Miss Kitten, Miss Harding didn't know a thing about what we were doing. She was way over in the other wing. You won't blame her, will you? Please promise that you won't send her away on account of this!

MISS K. Send her away? I hardly think so. A girl with presence of mind and courage enough to save my house from being robbed is a pretty valuable girl to keep in my establishment. And now I would like to inquire who left the back door wide open so that the house could be entered without any difficulty?

HILDA. I—I—did. I remember now. When I put the fudge out to c-c-c-cool! (*Begins to cry.*)

MISS K. Well, now, Polly, it doesn't look to me as if you stood alone in this affair, by any means.

POLLY. Oh, but I do, Miss Kitten!

BED. Well, now, you all just wait a minute for I want to say something. (*To Miss K.*) I've been right here all the time, and know that there wasn't one bit of harm meant in this party. It was just thoughtlessness and carelessness and I'm sure that the girls have had a lesson they'll never forget. So I'm going to ask you as a personal favor if you will wipe the slate off clean and let the girls start all over again.

MISS K. Of course, if you put it that way, I can't very well refuse. Girls, I guess it's about time that I introduce you to my sister.

ALL. Your sister?

BED. Yes, I'll have to own up, girls, that I'm not a mite of relation to Martha Price. That was just a mistake of Polly's. And now I'm going to tell you a little story that not even my sister knows anything about. We have an uncle, a very peculiar old man with loads of money and he lives with me. For a long time Priscilla has been trying to get him to give a gymnasium to Tracy School. When he found that I was coming here for a visit, he suddenly decided that he would do it. He told me that if I could find a class here worthy of the gift, that he would give the money to the class to be used for the gymnasium. Girls, you didn't know that I was any relation to your principal. You just took in a queer, little, old-fashioned woman and made her think she was just a girl, too, and entertained her like a queen. I say that girls who will do a thing like that are worthy of any gift. When I go back I'm going to tell Uncle Ebenezer to give his money to the Junior Class!

GIRLS (*gathering round BED. and throwing their arms around her*). Oh, aren't you the dear? You're the dearest thing in all the world!

BED. (*delighted*). Well, I declare, we've had a pretty exciting evening and it hasn't all been pleasant but it certainly has been real entertaining.



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